

OPENING SPEECH TO THE COMMONWEALTH YOUNG LEADERS' CONFERENCE

ROBERT J. MOORE

Current (?)
I always find it unconscionable that people will clap the speaker even before he opens his mouth. That is a pure act of faith. If they clap him during the speech it is usually an expression of hope: hope that if there is more to come it is both good and brief. Frequently, when they give him an ovation at the end it is a sign of charity. I should need all three of those acts of kindness from you this morning because I have undertaken the most dangerous, and in some senses the most elusive, of all the topics to which you will be subjected this week: Vision and Leadership. There cannot be two more impalpable words than those two in the English language or indeed in any other. Every rogue in history has used them to invoke, confirm and make sacrosanct his or her roguery. Every religious leader has used them to make his or her claims to divine commission intact. And every spirited non-doer who loves labour to the extent that they prefer to have other people do it for them has used those words to justify their own immunization from the virus of hard work. Fortunately, that particular form of immunization is absent from this company. And the proof of that, if proof were needed, is the fact that you have begun the ardours of collective thinking about the Commonwealth on the Canadian Labour Day. Nothing could be more appropriate. ~~That is a good point at which to begin both in time and in space.~~ In fact, I would go so far as to say that Canada is the perfect venue for a Commonwealth Young Leaders' Conference in the second half of the 1980's. Why? Because Canada is a country bounded on the North by mystery; on the South by importunity; on the East by history and on the West by the East. That makes Canada something of a middle kingdom, not just a middle power and therefore exactly the sort of place to do some serious thinking about where we are going from here. *as well as*

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A visionary
Let me change the time-frame somewhat and put a suggestion to you: incongruous as it may now seem, Mahatma Ghandi was one of the great fathers of the modern Commonwealth. I don't have to remind this audience who he was: he was the man who galvanized the Indian masses into their massive rejection of British rule; and he did it by invoking the patently Hindu and latently Christian concept of non-violence. He once described himself as follows: "I am not a visionary, Heaven forbid, I am a practical idealist". When Ghandi said he was not a visionary it was because the word in his day had a particularly pejorative meaning. It signified someone who was grandly useless. For his contemporaries it meant someone who was tolerated for the spacious beauty of his or her dreams and the sheer impossibility of bringing them into fact.

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The Commonwealth does not need visionaries of that sort. It does not need people whose spaciousness renders them totally innocuous; people who cannot bring their dreams into reality because ~~in the first place~~ their dreams have no relationship to reality.

When Ghandi described himself as that most formidable and dangerous of all human combinations - he was saying two things. The first is that the non-practical visionary is often treated by the guardians of the status quo with kindness; frequently given honours and honorifics which are meant to satisfy his or her need for recognition and at the same time to signify his or her impotence for change. In other words, an unpractical visionary is one of those people who, if I may misquote Karl Marx, ~~provides~~ ^{he comes} the opiate for the masses.

On the other hand, ~~you have the other type of person~~ ^{there is the opposite} - the practical non-visionary. He or she is equally irrelevant to the dynamics of change. ~~Why? Because if you have wonderful means but no concept of ends then you become extremely useful to the prevailing status quo.~~ ^{he comes} The guardians of the status quo love you because everything you do ~~helps to make them more flexible,~~ more efficient, and therefore more durable. To be practical without vision is to be obsessed with your instruments because you have lost your aim. ~~It is because~~ Ghandi understood that both those groups were basically impotent for fundamental change, and in particular to the change he was trying to achieve (the downfall of the British raj in India) that he called himself a practical idealist. In short, he taught us all that the impractical visionary will never give flesh and blood to his vision and the practical non-visionary cannot give direction to his realism.

But how does all of this relate to the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth prides itself on being an organism composed of practical idealists. But before I proceed to talk about the Commonwealth in terms of practical idealism I hope you will forgive me if I try on you my favorite description of the Commonwealth. Because it is minted in the dark recesses of my own mind I hope it will give you enough to quarrel with, not just for the rest of this week, but perhaps for the rest of this year. For me the Commonwealth is secondarily an organism; hardly an organization; it is primarily a state of mind. And this is how I describe it: the Commonwealth is a state of mind, bounded on the North by history, on the South by urgency, on the East by vision and on the West by know-how.

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Let me explain what I mean by those descriptions. Bounded on the North by history refers to the institution from which the Commonwealth took its birth, incongruously, the British Empire. And the centre of that Empire was, of course, London, England.

Out of the North came the Empire, out of the Empire came the Commonwealth, and one of the characteristics of the Commonwealth is the ability to take an instrument of domination - the communications network of the British Empire - and turn it into an experiment in global problem solving. That, by itself, is a remarkable feat. When I was growing up in Guyana one of the great influences in my life was the Anglican Archbishop of the West Indies and I remember him saying to me more than once "You know, my dear Bobby, truth is indivisible and clearly British". That was a pervasive concept: the Empire was truth and truth was the Empire.

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evolved into a new concept
The extraordinary thing is that the Commonwealth grew out of ~~that concept with one that is its total opposite.~~ If there is a motto on which the Commonwealth pins its existence it runs like this: *is that* "Truth is indivisible and clearly global". That represents a fascinating example of a complete turnaround in human history. The Commonwealth has taken the network, the mesh of institutions that once sustained a vast and effective system of domination and turned it into a network of liberation. Not always complete liberation *mind you*, and sometimes hypocritical posturings at liberation. But certainly the theme of liberation is always there. *in evidence*

There is another example of the Commonwealth's ability to take an imperial instrument and turn it into a creative organism with robust local roots and flavours: the English language. One of the things that unites the people in this room more potently than anything that divides them is the English language. Correction: I meant to say the English languages. For English has become a family of languages to which each of the peoples of the Commonwealth have made its own characteristic contributions, giving it local colour, texture and vitality; enormously enriching its range of words and expressions and producing vibrant literatures in which the racy voices of rural villagers, urban market mammies and street people can be heard. Shakespeare would have been delighted at the way in which people who were once the servants of English have now become its masters. I shall never forget the acidic wit of an Indian Public Servant with whom I was travelling down from Kashmir to New Delhi some years ago. He was in a lugubrious mood and clearly he was not happy with his treatment at the hands of his seniors in the Civil Service. His lugubrity lasted for practically the whole journey and as we came towards New Delhi I said to him "Mr. Azzees, could you sum up what is wrong with the Indian Public Service as far as you are concerned". He obliged "You want summary I will give you summary. For two long year all time I ask my boss for increment and for two long year all time he gave me excrement". Now you can hardly beat that as a succinct distillation of a winter of discontent. I am not sure that

Milton would have approved of that remark and certainly Thackeray and the other Victorian novelists would have found it outrageous. But I'm sure that Shakespeare and Shaw would have applauded.

the All of this is to say that the Commonwealth has shown a genius in taking the powerful language of the proconsul-remember that language has been described as "bloodless colonialism" - and turned it into a mirror of the souls of people as different from each other as West Indians from Indians and New Zealanders from Ghanians.

examples Now when I said that the Commonwealth was bounded on the South by urgency what exactly did I mean? I refer to the urgency of what we now call the Two Thirds World - ~~that is to say~~ of the developing countries of the Commonwealth. There are several forms of this urgency and I have time to give you only a few samples. One is the urgency of newly industrialized countries in the Commonwealth like India. ~~Here the pressure is to enlarge the present international economic system so as to give them a more decisive influence on the way it functions - an influence commensurate with their own tremendous contributions to its nature.~~ India, as you probably know, is now the eighth industrial country in the world and has the second largest scientific community amongst nations. Yet our present international system continues, ~~it would seem,~~ to be based on the myth that all that is really important about technology comes from the North. The truth is that the industrializing countries of the Commonwealth ~~and others~~ are breaking the bounds of the old international system, ~~but~~ there are many people in the North who simply refuse to see this and therefore are disinclined to accord nations like India the political influence which their achievements require. *accept*

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They are concerned

Here the Commonwealth has a supremely important job to do. ~~It is its business~~ to convince those whose perceptions of global affairs were formed in a different era to adjust their lenses and sharpen their focus so that they can read the signs and signals of a changing global order and shape their political behaviour accordingly. But the urgency comes from another quarter too: ~~from~~ the least developed countries of the Commonwealth who want to ensure a world in which they can actually survive. Think of many of the countries of Africa and some of the countries of the Caribbean where survival is questionable and where huge populations practically live from week to week. You will realize why they too are urgent about achieving changes in the world's economic structure and in its global political system. Many Third World countries are urgent to have the debt problem resolved in such a way that the creditors do not lose their cool and the debtors do not lose their all. It is a

problem with which we are just beginning to tinker. Some banks in the North have recently begun to put aside sums to realistically cope with the fact now grudgingly but increasingly acknowledged that some of those debts can never be repaid. Some creditors are showing a willingness to turn their debts into equity ~~shares~~ so as to release the development potential of the countries where the debt is at its most crippling. In fact this is one of the areas where your creativity and your imagination need most to be called into operation. For the debt trap is crippling not only on the economies of Third World countries but on their ecologies as well.

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Bounded on the East by vision. Never forget that it is out of Asia - the Middle East, Central Asia and East Asia - that the world's great religions originated. Everyone of those religions is an assertion of the ascendancy of the spiritual over the material. And when you analyze closely what the word spiritual implies it points to the human imagination. Each of those religions addresses the problem of entrapment: human beings entrapped in the prison of material, political or social circumstances and breaking out of their entrapment by the use of their imagination.

example
Ghandi was a perfect ~~case~~ in point. He remembers being entrapped by his desire to be as English as possible and the symbol of that entrapment was his three piece pin-stripe suit, his bola hat and umbrella and all the paraphernalia that accompanied his achievement of an English law degree. But his imagination broke out of that cultural prison and where his imagination led his intellect and his will quickly followed. That kind of leap of the imagination is called in Christian theology transcendence. It is the capacity of the human being to say no to the immediate and yes to the future and then use the power of the future as seen through the imagination to ~~break~~ the straight-jacket of the present and to ~~start creating~~ something new.
create break

structure
When, therefore, I say that the Commonwealth is bounded on the East by vision I'm referring to the Commonwealth emphasis on the imagination as the great agent for historical change. That is in direct contradiction to the classical Marxist concept of the imagination as being a reflection of prevailing social and political orders. Now don't ~~get me~~ wrong. I am not saying that Commonwealth leaders and thinkers and administrators fail to recognize the power of economics to influence the way we think and the way we act. Nor do they underestimate the power of economics to create ~~the~~ conditions of change. But they do argue that if economics creates the conditions of change it is the imagination that devises the responses to change. In other words when an old order is dying it is the imagination which is

crucial in creating the shape of a new one. The Commonwealth view is that human beings are neither totally contained by their circumstances nor constrained by them; that the imagination is the touch stone of freedom and freedom is the power to create new institutions to deal with new problems.

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Commonwealth leaders are not in the habit of tossing around the names of Moses, the great Hindu seers, Jesus, Buddha, Mohammed, or any of the other great initiators of religious movements. But their behaviour and their statements suggest that they understand that these religious leaders came upon their respective scenes at a time when fundamental changes in their societies were at work; that they tapped the imagination of the peoples around them to create new and alternative orders to deal with those fundamental changes. In other words the Commonwealth in its better moments, and it doesn't always have better moments, is dedicated to the idea that vision is imagination rendered robust by will and practical by know-how and particularly required at times when the river of history is inundating its banks and needs new channels to flow in.

diplomatic
And that brings me to the last description of the Commonwealth: it is bounded on the West by know-how. One of the most fascinating examples on the Commonwealth gift for know-how is the actual creation of the modern Commonwealth. When Nehru and company wanted to turn India from a monarchy into a republic *was* an acute problem arose. How could the Commonwealth, which up to then ~~was~~ a collection of monarchies centered on the same sovereign accommodate a republic whose head was not the British monarch but a local president. Nehru discussed this with a number of Commonwealth leaders including, predictably and characteristically, Louis St. Laurent the then Prime Minister of Canada. Canada, as you probably know, is a country which is really a political compromise worked into a resistant geographical setting and Canadians live with the art of compromise as part of the stuff of their existence. Solutions by way of compromise to intransigent problems is the peculiarly Canadian genius. In fact any Canadian you meet is likely to be a walking compromise of several contradictory features. Look around you and you will see.

But back to Louis St. Laurent and the solution of Nehru's dilemma about having India as a republic. St. Laurent suggested a totally imaginative arrangement: the sovereign of England would become the head of the Commonwealth without necessarily being the head of every State within it. As a republic with its own President India could recognize the sovereign of England as head of the organism of which India was a constituent member; and countries like Australia or New Zealand could recognize the sovereign of England as both head of the Commonwealth and head of

State. The result is that the Commonwealth is now composed of far more republics than it is of monarchies. In fact the monarchical Commonwealth states are in a small and diminishing minority. Equally important is the fact that the Queen of England has become and has remained a significant and powerful factor in Commonwealth affairs.

and the Commonwealth?

But let's get back to the business of know-how. That implies a capacity to do two things: the first to accept political realities for what they are and second to work out the means to take them where you want them to be. That is fundamentally the meaning of the word consensus in the Commonwealth. When the Commonwealth works for consensus it recognizes that there are certain stubborn realities which take time to dissolve. It proceeds, therefore, by dialogue and tends to discourage those highly dramatic, detonating, confrontations of immovable pyrotechnics which are so often characteristic of the general assembly of the United Nations. What it insists on is an almost English approach to "muddling through" situations allowing the contrarieties to exist together until the timing is such that one of the contrarieties achieves supremacy over the other. I shall mention this a little more fully when I talk about Rhodesia and its transformation into Zimbabwe.

But let me approach the business of know-how from another angle. Know-how implies skills, technique, technology. But in the Commonwealth it means something more: sharing those things. You might even say that the Commonwealth exists to facilitate selective and reciprocal borrowing among its diverse peoples. In the dictionary of this organism "know-how" is defined as a communal possession. Indeed one of the unspoken mottos of this slice of the world goes as follows: "The singular of people is person but the plural of person is community". Hence this conference and the scores of others like it. ~~They all~~ are built around the assumption that when individuals like you get together you are doing so as the representatives of communities and those communities will benefit accordingly.

(Canada!)

The Commonwealth does not keep easy company with those people whether they live in the North or in the South who believe that individualism is God's great gift to human kind. From the evidence of its many conferences, its programs, its projects and its philosophy as enunciated by the Commonwealth Secretariat in London it is clear that the Commonwealth does not subscribe to the view that a community exists primarily to secure the growth and perfection of some of its individual members. Quite the reverse. The Commonwealth as it stands in the second half of the 1980's is dedicated to the proposition that the primacy of the individual and the primacy of the community are two parts of the same continuum. The aim of development is neither to subordinate

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the individual to the community nor the community to the individual but to see them as indispensable to each other and therefore mutually reinforcing. ~~You can sum it up this way:~~ The individual provides the impetus; the community provides participation and the combination creates a momentum. Impetus without participation is energy without dissemination which means skewed growth. Participation without impetus is hectic inertia which means no momentum and therefore no growth. Perhaps that's why one of the best metaphors for the Commonwealth is the club. A good club is always greater than the sum of the individuals who comprise it. Equally a good club protects the individuality of its members for without that it would cease to be a club and become a regiment. The purpose of your being at this conference illustrates the Commonwealth philosophy beautifully: your powers and capabilities and imagination as young leaders will be amplified and heightened by being together for this week and a networking will be established amongst you which will play an important part on your lives. But each of you is important because of the communities you represent and to which you will return. This conference is about their growth as well as yours.

All of this may be perfectly true. But will the rest of the world notice the Commonwealth? Yes, it is true that the Commonwealth consists of about a quarter of the human race. But isn't it equally true, as its critics say, that the Commonwealth is more commentary than action? Some people see it as a charming talking shop. The heads of government, they say, meet every two years to deliberate impotently on the affairs of the globe; then to return to their countries carrying the final communique with them. And that is that. ~~Some people have actually described the Commonwealth~~ as a marvelous piece of political poetry which makes the members mightily pleased with the effect they make upon themselves.

That kind of dismissive remark might sound plausible if the world were not in the state that it is in the second half of the 1980's. ~~Let us see what that state is.~~

We are faced with four crises, each one of which is pervasive enough to render the world a different place by the end of this century. The convergence of four such crises has brought human kind to a stage ^{which} it has never been ~~at~~ before. The first of those crises is ~~the nuclear one~~. We have enough nuclear hardware to destroy the world three hundred and ten times over and we could do it either by intention or inadvertency, either by decision or by mistake. \$1.9 Million are spent every minute of every day on nuclear stockpiles alone. And a figure almost as staggering is spent by Third World countries on acquiring conventional arms.

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The second crisis is ~~the economic one~~. The debt crisis is only a symptom of the economic fragility of the global arrangements. But it is a horrific symptom. A sum in the vicinity of \$3 Trillion is owed by Third World countries to First *the "developed"* World ones and there are many economists who say that the capital is unlikely ever to be paid back. If I may misquote Winston Churchill's most famous remark "Never was so much owed by so many to so few". Another symptom of the global economic morass is the fact that many nations are being attracted by that most dangerous of all recourses - protectionism. That places debt-straitened Third World countries in an acute dilemma. The bankers say to them produce more in order to pay the interest on your debt. Then the manufacturers say to them we cannot allow you to sell your goods here because you are cheating through your cheap labour. But perhaps the most interesting symptom of our economic malaise is the fact that the world's greatest creditor nation twenty years ago is now the world's greatest debtor nation - the United States of America.

And as if those two crises were not enough we now have on our hands a demographic crisis. The population of the world is going to reach something like 8 Billion people by the first decade of the 21st century. That is not the real problem however. The real problem is that the vast majority of those people are in the poorest countries of the world and their poverty forces them to use up the only resource - a fragile resource - left available to them: the natural environment. And that brings me naturally to the fourth crisis: the ecological *crisis* one, the one that pulls all the others together. With our pollutants in the industrial countries, with the pervasive poverty in the poorer countries with our determination to use up the non-renewable resources of the planet we are practically bringing the texture of the natural order to a dead end. In other words, with our industrial recklessness on the one hand and our insensitive indifference to the plight of the poor we may render the planet no longer a suitable habitat for the human experiment. No matter how dynamic our economics may be. For dynamic economics are no use on a planet that has lost its power to sustain.

The ancient Confucian Chinese had a curse which they visited on their enemies: "may you live in interesting times". This is precisely what we are doing at the moment. At such times the motto "Business as usual" is of little use to anyone. In fact we can go so far as to say that what we call the modern world - the post 1945 world - is now at its end. We are entering a new historical era; we have to start with new approaches. We have to initiate new departures; we have to recognize that many of the things that were not required of us before the 1980's are now mandated ~~on~~ us to survive after the 1980's. Indeed we all have

the responsibility of ensuring the peaceful demise of an old world struggling not to die and the even more peaceful birth of a new world threatening to arrive with turmoil. This is the opportunity for the Commonwealth, among other international bodies, to bring to bear its capacity for vision and leadership.

But what exactly do I mean by vision? In my reckoning vision consists of three things: first, the capacity to sharply analyse what changes are taking place in the world beyond the neon-lit and often deceptive buzz-words of the media. The primary components of vision are, therefore, clarity and penetration: the ability to look beyond the clutter and clash of everyday events to the fundamental forces that give rise to them. Secondly, vision implies, as I hinted before, imagination. You may remember that when I was talking about the world's great religions I mentioned the supremacy of the imagination over the imperatives of the immediate; the power to create a future that is alternative to the present, a practical and achievable future, and then to use that blue-print to determine the way we should behave now.

Thirdly: timing. The most subtle component of vision. Without it plans and strategies, rich in analysis and imagination, go off the rails. It is the knack of gauging the strength of those who agree with you, the confusion or self-doubt of those who don't, and the measure of those who have lost their trust in the prevailing order but have not yet put anything in its place. If the calculus of those three conditions is in your favour, you move. Good timing therefore is the art of impelling a convergence of forces each of which by itself would be too little, too soon or too late.

But let us be very clear about this. Anybody who has both feet in the future has already left this world for the next one. Anybody who has both feet in the present is already in the past. But anybody who has one foot in the present and one foot in the future is a genuine practical visionary. Let us look at an example, a recent example. The vision of the Commonwealth was that Rhodesia should become Zimbabwe. It took far longer than most people expected. But the Commonwealth heads of state did not give up the idea that the minority Smith Regime would be replaced by a legitimate government based on the black majority. In other words, they did not treat the present as if it were the future. Rather the other way round. They treated the future as if it were already the present. And so they did a number of interesting things. First, everytime they met they called for the removal of the Regime. Secondly, at every kind of international forum and particularly at the United Nations and its affiliate bodies they continued to call attention to Regime's illegitimate existence and the need for its overthrow.

Thirdly they ensured that contributions to assist the freedom fighters in their war against the Regime came not only from Commonwealth nations but from non-Commonwealth sources as well. And note: a great deal of that assistance was not just of the military kind but oriented towards education, health, and organizational training against the day when the freedom fighters would be themselves the government of Zimbabwe. Finally the Commonwealth showed an impeccable sense of timing. When it was clear that the freedom fighters were beginning to get the better of the Smith Regime the Commonwealth moved to persuade Britain, which had stood out most against any change in Rhodesia to put its prestige and its influence behind a peaceful transfer of power to the leaders of the black majority. And in elections carefully supervised by Commonwealth observers, Mr. Mugabe emerged to be Prime Minister of independent Zimbabwe.

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All the elements ^{and} of vision were at work in that situation. Clarity of analysis, a commitment to a future that was different from the present, enabling policies to achieve the desired results, a refusal to let issue be obscured and a sense of timing

If you look carefully you will find the same elements at work in the Commonwealth's attitude towards the Apartheid Regime in South Africa. For many years now the Commonwealth has been denouncing apartheid, knowing full well that up to quite recently the institution has been robust with economic and theological under-pinnings and supported by some of the major industrial countries in the world either openly or under-cover. In short the Commonwealth has refused to let the commanding present of apartheid obscure the necessity of a future without it. Secondly Commonwealth spokesmen, educators, media people, writers have been foremost amongst those who educate international opinion about the undesirability of apartheid and the need for its dismantlement. Thirdly now that the black people of South Africa are escalating the assault on apartheid the Commonwealth has begun to move, not with total unanimity but certainly decisively to pull the strands of the international community in the direction of isolating South Africa and ~~trying to induce~~ a change that does not involve creating another Lebanon under the southern tip of the African Continent.

If that is vision, what is leadership? During the era of decolonization - the 1950's and 1960's - the prevailing political theory favoured the rise of elites and their control over the new states. The motto could be summed up in a misquotation from the New Testament "Seek ye first the kingdom of the elite and all other things will be added on to you". In fact it did not work out this way and as development theory acquired greater maturity the vogue of the elites lost ground. The "trickle-down" theory

not an entirely
happy metaphor

(Should be)? of development which was the elitist theory called by another name was soon recognized to produce its opposite - the vacuum effect: the wealth of the society was sucked up to the top and having reached the top stayed there. There are three words that characterize the behaviour of elites and none of them is a good word for leadership: concentration, consumption, control. None of the ^{three} forms of behaviour summed up in those three words make a Third World society developmentally dynamic; for they sacrifice the interest of the many for the few. Leadership in the Commonwealth ^(is now being) understood to mean exactly the opposite. And to explain what I mean by that let me give a quotation once again from Ghandi. He was sitting in his ashram one day and observed an immense crowd of his own followers going by. He turned to the celebrated journalist who was interviewing him and said "There go my people, I must catch up with them for I am their leader".

That is fundamentally what leadership means in the Commonwealth of the 1980's. ~~Why? Because~~ it is being increasingly recognized that the leader is someone who turns a group of persons into a community. A leader is someone who recognizes what is inherently valuable in the inherited traditions of a people and by judicious adjustments and creative accommodations equips them to cope with the problems presented to them in the era of the 1980's. A leader is someone who taps the potential of ordinary people on the ground; who enables them to empower themselves to solve the problems before them. And it is about empowerment, particularly of the poorer peoples of the Commonwealth countries that the Commonwealth concept of leadership is all about.

(Should be) Let us look at an example. In Bangladesh there are millions of very poor women chronically short of the means of sustenance. Frequently these women possess entrepreneurial skills. What they need is a small amount of capital to enable them to begin a venture. But the traditional banks in Bangladesh, as elsewhere, are not normally disposed to lending small sums of money to poor people since their very poverty prevents them from offering any collateral. To solve this problem the Grameen bank of Bangladesh was created - an institution that is a perfect example of practical vision issuing in inspiring leadership. One of the assumptions on which the bank works is that poor people are usually better at repaying their loans than well-to-do ones. You see, the Grameen bank lends capital not to individuals but to groups of poor people; but it lends to one member of a group at a time. Consequently the peer pressure of the other members of the group insures the repayment of the loan. Those who have to wait for a loan exercise considerable vigilance on those who have received one, to insure repayment.

The Grameen bank in Bangladesh has not only enabled many poor women to start small businesses; it has also caused some of the more traditional banks to review their lending policies and decide to make loans available to poor people on the same basis. And the example is spreading; frequently with the backing of non-governmental organizations in the developed countries who act as security to those banks which now open their lending policies to poor people.

The power of the imagination of which I was speaking earlier was abundantly evident in the creation of the Grameen bank. Two groups of people on opposite sides of a great divide were caught in traps, one of poverty and the other of perception. The women, although possessed of entrepreneurial skills were prevented by their poverty from finding any means of expressing them. The banks were caught in a trap of perception: they did not see poor people as possible clients. By its creation, the Grameen bank began to break the trap of poverty for the women and the trap of perception for the banking institutions. You might be interested to hear that the person who pioneered the Grameen bank is now being invited to the developed countries of the world to advise authorities there on how to create banking institutions for the poor and the underprivileged of those societies.

Another example of leadership arising from below ^{rather than} ~~and not~~ being imposed from above emerged clearly out of a visit of a group of Tanzanians small farmers to the prairie provinces of Canada. At the beginning of the visit these Third World farmers were awesomely impressed. The magnitude, the intricacy, the efficiency of farming technology on the prairies left these farmers almost drained of any hope that they could do anything significant in Tanzania.

And then the whole scene changed. It changed when the Tanzanian farmers learned from their Canadian counterparts that in most cases when the farmer dies or retires his or her farm will not be passed on to their offspring but will most likely end up in the hands of a bank. From that moment onwards the Tanzanian farmers showed a distinct preference for their own system. Passing the land on from generation to generation, they said, was as important as owning the land in the first place and producing crops on it. For what they were passing on, was an attitude to nature, an attitude to people in contact with nature, a continual enrichment of farming skills and techniques dependent less on sophisticated technology and more on human ingenuity and a whole culture that centered itself on the land.

As leaders they stood for the primacy of the small farmer in a Continent that until quite recently has tended to neglect her

or him. As leaders they were working towards bringing African political figures, economists and planners back to the perception that it is the small farmers of that Continent that will make all the difference to the quality of its survival. As leaders they were working with people on the land to turn the tide against the drift to the cities and the dependence on food aid for overseas. They were, in fact, apostles of ecological salvation.

A third example of leadership. Recently, in a certain state in India there was a large mass of unemployed people and an equally large area of forest the two existing, so to speak, side by side. Certain corporations began to zero in on the forest seeing it as a potential for considerable profits with one of its spin-offs being the employment of a number of these unemployed people. The logic of the situation seemed compelling: if the trees were cut down people would not go hungry. And so the men from a large number of villages were employed to start hacking away at the forest.

On the day when operations were about to begin the army of men with their axes and their saws advanced upon the forest only to find a human barrier between themselves and the trees. Their womenfolk had made a living chain around the outer trees and were telling their brothers, husbands and fathers that if they were going to cut the trees down they would have to cut them up first. That is leadership. Women had hit on one of the most fundamental ingredients of leadership - balancing the immediate and the urgent against the fundamental and the important. It was not, they said, that they didn't want any trees cut down. It was that they wanted assurances that part of the forest would be preserved for the forest was as much a source of livelihood to them, to the soil, to the birds and to the animals as were the wages which their menfolk would be paid.

The two central characters of that story are the women and the trees. The women I have just talked about. Let us look now at the tree as a symbol. In my reckoning the tree is one of the most telling symbols of development from the bottom up. Assemble the right conditions at the base and the tree takes root and grows into the air. In the process it stabilizes and enriches both the soil beneath it and the biosphere around it.

Similarly, with the development of communities of the poor. Assemble the right conditions at the base and a dynamic of development takes root in the community. As the community grows in resourcefulness, confidence and power so it kindles the same qualities in other communities. The cumulative effect of this begins to be felt across the whole society and within the political system. Genuine, salutary change is then on its way.

And just as the death of trees is always bad news for the ecosystem so the stagnation of communities of small farmers and urban dwellers is bad news for any political economy.

Finally, the tree is an excellent symbol for the Commonwealth. Healthy trees interlace and interlink with one another and in the tropical forest they are brought even closer together by the creepers that entwined themselves around them. That interlacing represents the shared strengths but also the mutual vulnerability of all the world's peoples of whom the Commonwealth is a most useful and convenient sample.

Commonwealth leadership takes its stand on the assumption that the whole world is now in a state of mutual vulnerability. It is like a drum: strike it in one place and it will reverberate everywhere. If mutual vulnerability is the condition of spaceship Earth then that condition demands sensitive forms of international cooperation and international institutions that work to bring balance into the way peoples use the Earth's resources. And another word for balance is justice. Justice involves enabling "little" people to live with greater dignity and vitality and with greater control over the reproduction of their own numbers than the present international system allows. And remember: there are really no "little" people, only people who do not know how big they are.

Stupendous? Yes. Impossible? No. Necessary? Absolutely. A long time ago the great Roman writer Seneca made an observation that was as true then as it is now: "It is not because things are difficult that we do not dare them; it is because we do not dare that they are difficult". And then with great realism he added "In order to make our dare in full consciousness, it is necessary to have measured the nature and extent of the difficulties and to have measured our own resources to deal with them". Realism, imagination, analysis, know-how, vision - those words are not really strangers to one another except when our minds make them so. You will have to invoke every one of those words in your discussions and your deliberations this week. That is why you are here: to learn from your fellows that the Commonwealth is at its best when it consists of many centers of power and many more centers of creativity. And if you and the communities you represent work on the maxim that power disseminated is people enriched then no one need have any fear of the leadership you will exercise in the years to come.

THE END

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